The Conditions, Criteria, and Dialectics of Human Dignity
A Transectional Perspective

HERBERT C. KELMAN
Department of Psychological and Social Relations
Harvard University

Human dignity refers to the status of individuals as ends in themselves rather than means to transcendent ends. To be consistent with dignity, institutions must provide for their constituents' dignity and community—the two components of dignity. These correspond roughly to individual freedom and social justice, which are seen as independent conditions of dignity. Achievements, tensions, and preservation of human dignity are in a large extent a transectional enterprise. This paper addresses three issues in the realization of dignity in which the transectional dimension plays a significant role. It proposes (1) that the conditions for realizing human dignity (which include international peace in addition to social justice and individual freedom) must be created through worldwide efforts, given our increasing global interdependence; (2) that the criteria for assessing whether policies and institutional arrangements are compatible with human dignity must be universalistic, while remaining respectful of cultural and political differences; and (3) that the social processes whereby human dignity is extended and protected are inherently dialectical, since they require both the fulfillment and the inhibition of nationalistic demands.

AUTHORS' NOTE: This paper is the Presidential Address delivered at the 1977 Convention of the International Studies Association, St. Louis, Missouri, March 17, 1977. The paper was written while the author was a resident scholar at Villa Serbelloni, the Bellagio Study and Conference Center of the Rockefeller Foundation. I am grateful to Professor Charles K. O'Bannon, Director of Villa Serbelloni and, incidentally, a former President of the International Studies Association.

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES QUARTERLY, Vol. 21, No. 2, September 1977
© 1977 S.A.A.
personal fulfillment for me. Its significance is enhanced by the fact that I did not come to the field of international relations by the standard professional route. My primary discipline was—and continues to be—social psychology. And my primary motivation for turning to the study of international relations was—and continues to be—a concern for world peace and for increasing the capacity of the social sciences to contribute to its achievement.

It is almost precisely 25 years ago that a small group of young social scientists, which I had helped to mobilize, established the Research Exchange on the Prevention of War. Most of us were psychologists, but we made serious and partially successful efforts to become interdisciplinary. Very few of us had professional training in international relations, or were actually doing research in the field when we formed the group. Our aim was to promote the idea that social science research can make relevant contributions to the prevention of war and attainment of peace. The Research Exchange led, through a direct line of descent, to the establishment of the Journal of Conflict Resolution a few years later, and foreshadowed the emergence of the peace research movement in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. My own work, over this quarter century, addressed itself increasingly to international relations issues, including efforts to conceptualize and integrate social-psychological contributions to international relations, and empirical research on international exchange, nationalist ideology, public opinion on foreign-policy issues, and new approaches to the resolution of international conflict.

My election to the office of ISA President thus reflects a gratifying degree of acceptance within the profession, not only of myself as an individual—despite my unorthodox origins—but also of some of the ideas that I, among others, have been putting forward. To this sense of profound gratification I must add the hope that neither I nor these ideas have gained so much respectability that it reduces our critical and innovative role—our capacity to challenge established assumptions and to propose alternative concepts and perspectives.

In view of this personal history, I was delighted to discover, a year ago, the theme that had been selected for this year's convention, "World-Wide Appraisal of Institutions: Toward Realizing Human Dignity." Although I played no part whatsoever in the selection of this theme, it reflects all the emphases with which I have been identified. Indeed, it almost seems as if the title had been deliberately constructed to contain a word representing each of my biases. The term "human dignity" expresses a value commitment, thus abandoning the chimera of a value-free social science. The words "toward realizing" point to the applied, action-oriented component of the enterprise. The word "appraisal" implies a scientific orientation, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. The term "institutions" suggests a conception of the field as part of a broad, interdisciplinary social science. And the term "world-wide" indicates a global, transnational definition of the enterprise.

DEFINING HUMAN DIGNITY

Snyder et al. (1976) use the term human dignity as a summative symbol for the combined preferred states associated with various basic values. My own definition differs from theirs in that I take the individual as my starting point and I am less comprehensive in the values subsumed under the concept. Still, my conception is sufficiently broad so that there is probably a close correspondence between the phenomena that we are each trying to capture when we use human dignity in the appraisal of institutional structures and practices.

Human dignity can be said to refer to the status of individuals as ends in themselves, rather than as means toward some extraneous ends. We can distinguish two components of human dignity: identity and community. "To accord a person identity is to perceive him as an individual, independent and distinguishable from others, capable of making choices, and entitled to live his own life on the basis of his own goals and values. To accord a person community is to perceive him—along with one's self—as part of an interconnected network of individuals who care for
needs for food, housing, clothing, security, health care, and education; to protect the society as a whole against violence, war, terrorism, disease, and disaster; to use the power of their communities to act as a force for themselves and to assure that all segments of the population have equal access to all of these benefits.

The requirements for individual dignity and social justice are
some degree mutually exclusive. There are occasions when these
can come into conflict with each other, and when that can be
achieved only at some sacrifice in the other. For the long run,
realizing human dignity and each of its components, ideals,
and community, is a continuing process with often conflicting
requirements either fulfilled or abandoned. It is the job of people
in a society to identify the needs and welfare of the population, or do not asse
these values. In some societies, mechanisms are established to
reach all segments of the population—whether they are
accomplished by private or public means. It requires an
individual to identify the needs of the people, and then
choose the best means to do so. To do this, they must
understand and appreciate the nature of the problem, and
create a plan to solve it. They must also have the
courage to take action, even if it means sacrificing their own
interests. This is a difficult task, and it requires a great deal
of dedication and effort. But it is necessary if we are to
achieve justice and dignity for all people.
[Text from the image is not legible or cannot be transcribed accurately.]
Most of the conditions for human dignity can be unambiguously understood under the categories of social justice and individual freedom. Without them, there are no clear conditions for human dignity. International peace is also needed for human dignity. International peace is needed for human dignity because it provides a stable and secure environment for individuals to live in, and it helps to prevent conflicts and violence that can harm human dignity. Security, as a consequence, is a cornerstone of international peace, as it is a condition for survival of individuals and groups. Security is a condition for survival of individuals and groups, and it is also a condition for the survival of states. Security is needed for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is a condition for the survival of states, and it is also a condition for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is needed for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is a condition for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is needed for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is a condition for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is needed for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is a condition for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is needed for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is a condition for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups. Security is needed for the survival of states, and it is also needed for the survival of individuals and groups.
security in a nuclear age can be attained only through international cooperation; to the reduction of arms sales and other actions by which greater powers encourage wars among smaller powers or engage in proxy wars through them; to the development and institutionalization of transnational mechanisms for the management and resolution of conflicts; and to the exploration of alternative mechanisms for conducting conflict capable of advancing social justice by nonviolent means.

Social justice. I have already spoken of social justice—in the sense of meeting the basic needs of the population, providing for their welfare and protection, and assuring equal access to these benefits to all—as a fundamental condition of human dignity. Increasing global interdependence in economic pursuits, in the development, utilization, and preservation of both natural and human resources, and in the maintenance of ecological balance and a liveable environment makes it imperative to plan and organize for the achievement of social justice within the framework of a total world system.

The most obvious domain of interdependence is the environment shared by different nations, such as the sea and the atmosphere, which are subject to dangerous pollution and resource depletion. The economic activities and life styles of one nation—not to speak of its modes of transportation and weapons tests—have a direct effect on the health, the quality of life, and the availability of food supplies of its neighbors. Clearly, the use of this shared environment must be subject to joint planning and control, based on readiness of each nation to yield a degree of its sovereignty.

A corollary of interdependence that clashes more sharply with the tradition of national sovereignty is the concept that scarce resources, regardless of their geographical distribution, are part of the heritage of all humankind. This concept places upon each society the responsibility to consider how its utilization of such resources influences their availability to other societies. An example that is often cited in this connection is the protein-inefficient use of grain as cattle feed in affluent countries, where meat has become the major source of protein in the diet; as a result, grain is less available and more costly to poorer countries, where it represents a direct source of protein. Thus, avoiding dangerous shortages in food, as well as energy and other necessities, requires joint planning, on a world-wide basis, for the most efficient use and conservation of scarce resources. Such plans may well require changes in wasteful lifestyles in some countries to assure that basic needs are met in others.

This brings us to the problem of inequality, which is the fundamental consideration in the achievement of social justice. Interdependence for scarce resources among countries that are relatively equal can generally be managed, through trade and intergovernmental agreements, to their mutual satisfaction. Interdependence takes on a qualitatively different meaning, however, when there are marked inequalities in the resources of the countries, compounded by inequalities in economic, military, and diplomatic power. Social justice in the face of such inequality can be achieved only if the have nations assume some responsibility for the welfare of the have nots. This responsibility, as a matter of justice, becomes even more apparent when we recall that the existing inequalities are often the outcomes of long histories of exploitation of the have nots by the haves. To confront the consequences of inequalities and to move toward their elimination requires collaborative, global programs for the transfer of resources—such as, for example, programs designed to combat hunger and malnutrition throughout the world, to strengthen agricultural and industrial capacities, and to develop a variety of productive skills. An essential feature of such programs must be the development of independent resources—natural, technical, human, and organizational—so that the have not societies will become increasingly capable of meeting the needs of their own populations.

Inequalities in resources, especially when coupled with inequalities in power, have a tendency to perpetuate themselves. Thus, for example, economic investments in developing societies by firms from industrialized societies may encourage the development and use of resources, facilities, and personnel in
ways that serve the interests of the dominant economy at the long-run expense of the weaker one. The interaction may, perhaps inadvertently, create or reinforce a pattern of dependency, quite inconsistent with the goals of reducing inequalities. To achieve greater social justice, global institutions must address themselves to the development of patterns of relationships among nations of unequal power and resources that will avoid and reduce economic exploitation, reverse the self-perpetuating cycle of dependency, and close the gap between the rich and the poor.

**Individual freedom.** The other fundamental condition of human dignity that I have discussed, individual freedom, has increasingly become a matter of world-wide concern, expressed through transnational activities for the protection of human rights. Such world-wide efforts are imperative, not only because human freedom (like social justice) is indivisible as a matter of general principle, but also because of the high degree of interdependence among groups across national boundaries in the status of their human rights and their struggle against repression. The interdependence is rooted in the fact that violations of human rights are generally directed at groups that have cross-cutting links with counterparts in other areas of the world. These links may be based on common racial, ethnic, or religious identity; on common political ideology, or on common artistic, scientific, or professional values and commitments.

Sometimes the status of human rights of a group within a country is directly affected by the actions or involvements of their fellows elsewhere. Ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable to retaliatory actions when the country in which they reside clashes with the country to which they are ethnically linked. To take a diverse set of examples, Japanese-Americans during World War II, Jews in some Arab countries after the Middle East War of 1967, Vietnamese in Cambodia in the early 1970s, and Kenyans in Uganda during the past year have all experienced repression, of varying degrees of intensity, as a result of outside events in which they had no part. Failures from events in other countries may also affect political dissidents and independent-minded intellectuals, whose governments may decide to curtail their freedom, as a preventive measure, in response to rising dissent elsewhere.

Another consequence of cross-cutting links is that violation of the human rights of a group within one country is often experienced by its counterparts throughout the world as a violation of their own rights. In part, this is a symbolic reaction, based on their psychological identification with members of their own group, wherever they may reside. In part, the reaction reflects the view that the group's struggle for its rights in a particular country is but one aspect of a common struggle—across national lines—for the extension and protection of the entire group's rights. Thus, black Africans across the continent react to the repression of the black population in South Africa or Rhodesia in the context of their own still incomplete struggle against colonialism; Jews throughout the world react to the repression of fellow-Jews in the Soviet Union or elsewhere in the context of their long-standing struggle against anti-Semitism; political dissidents everywhere react to the repression of their counterparts in Chile, Czechoslovakia, or Iran in the context of their own struggle against authoritarian regimes. Often a group's reaction to violations of human rights in other countries is based not merely on sympathy and support, but on perceived threat to their own rights. Ethnic minorities and political dissidents have good reason to be concerned about possible contagion effects: repression of a group in one country may help to legitimize and provide an example for similar acts in other parts of the world.

The interdependence of groups across national boundaries in the status of their human rights is matched by their interdependence in the struggle for human rights. Human rights movements within a country are heavily influenced by activities in other countries. Other countries often provide models for the rights to be demanded and the ways to organize for their attainment. Direct and indirect contacts with outside individuals and groups are important sources of encouragement. Official and unofficial agencies in other countries, as well as transnational and sometimes international organizations, provide moral and
The struggle to establish and protect human rights and freedoms in any country is a matter of active international concern. The contemporary world is characterized by the existence of a wide variety of political, economic, and social conditions, and the struggle for human rights and freedoms is a complex and multifaceted process. The struggle for human rights and freedoms is not limited to the struggle against repression, but also includes the struggle for self-determination and national independence. The struggle for human rights and freedoms is not only a struggle for the present generation, but also for future generations. The struggle for human rights and freedoms is not only a struggle for the right to live, but also a struggle for the right to live with dignity, freedom, and equality. The struggle for human rights and freedoms is a struggle for justice, peace, and prosperity for all people.
to an earlier example, child labor in the Western experience represents an abuse associated with the industrial revolution and their children were often miserable and exploited. In modern times, child labor is no longer considered acceptable and is fought against by human rights organizations. However, it is still prevalent in some parts of the world.

The practice of child labor is not new. It has existed throughout history and has been documented in various cultures. It is often linked to poverty, lack of education, and cultural beliefs. In some cases, it is seen as a way for families to earn a living and provide for their children.

In some cultures, child labor is considered a normal part of life. Children are expected to work alongside their parents, and it is seen as a rite of passage. However, in other cultures, child labor is seen as a violation of human rights and is illegal.

The international community has taken steps to combat child labor. The United Nations has adopted several resolutions and conventions to address the issue. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has set minimum standards for working conditions and has worked to eradicate child labor.

Despite these efforts, child labor continues to be a problem in many parts of the world. It is estimated that there are millions of children who work in hazardous conditions and are at risk of exploitation. The problem is particularly severe in developing countries, where poverty and lack of education contribute to the prevalence of child labor.

The practice of child labor is not just a human rights issue, but also an economic and social one. Children who work instead of going to school are less likely to have access to education and are more likely to be trapped in cycles of poverty. The cycle of poverty can be broken by providing children with access to education and employment opportunities.

In conclusion, the practice of child labor is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach. While international efforts have been made to combat child labor, more needs to be done to ensure that children are protected from exploitation and are able to enjoy their childhood.
The line between practices that reflect legitimate cultural differences and those that represent violations of universal human rights standards is not a rigid one. While we cannot escape the obligation to examine both, we must also acknowledge that mutual respect for diversity and cultural exchange can strengthen the global community. The respect for human rights obligations, cultural exchange - the essence of the global village, the dynamic and interlinked nature of humankind. It is essential to understand and respect the cultural context to avoid placing cultural differences in opposition to human rights.

The subject of human rights is complex and challenging, involving an ethical and political discourse. The ethical dimension is reflected in the respect for human dignity, while the political dimension deals with the implementation of human rights in a global context.

The respect for human rights obligations is not a static concept, but rather a dynamic one, that must evolve with the changing circumstances of the global community. The ethical dimension is reflected in the respect for human dignity, while the political dimension deals with the implementation of human rights in a global context. The ethical dimension is reflected in the respect for human dignity, while the political dimension deals with the implementation of human rights in a global context.

The subject of human rights is complex and challenging, involving an ethical and political discourse. The ethical dimension is reflected in the respect for human dignity, while the political dimension deals with the implementation of human rights in a global context.
a backing sense of national identity, and can in fact help to create such an identity. National identity can be a source of legitimacy for the state. The state can provide a sense of security and can be an important source of inspiration and identification.

The state is the embodiment of the nation. It is the vehicle of the nation's identity and the instrument of its power. It is the means by which the nation's values and ideals are expressed. The state is the visible embodiment of the nation, and it is through the state that the nation's identity is realized.

The state is the embodiment of the nation. It is the vehicle of the nation's identity and the instrument of its power. It is the means by which the nation's values and ideals are expressed. The state is the visible embodiment of the nation, and it is through the state that the nation's identity is realized.
are creating serious unrest in old, well-established states and even, in some cases, threatening to break them up. These conditions are imposing all the more serious and additional requirements upon the governments of third world states, since it is the population segments within the nationalities. At the same time, they reinforce the importance of transnational arrangements, in view of the cross-cutting links between national groups, such as those of ethnic, religious, and political origin.

These transnational arrangements reinforce the importance of the nation-state—quite apart from any ideological commitment to the concept of a global society. Along with the potentially liberating role of nationalism, makes the extension and protection of human dignity a shared responsibility. The enforcement of human dignity, in the context of the current international system, the exercise of whose norms often requires at least a highly autonomous unit within a larger state. We are thus faced with the contradiction that nationalism represents both a vehicle for and a barrier to the enhancement of human dignity.
two grounds. First, it ignores the fact that creation of a new nation-state has a potentially liberating effect precisely because of the powerful role of nation-states within the international system, which is preserved and modeled by the established states. Second, it draws an unrealistically sharp line between new and established states, forgetting that new states quickly become established in the sense of developing vested interests and patterns of internal discrimination or external aggression, and that established states, under the prevailing conditions of interpenetration, may well find their autonomy threatened. Thus, the dialectical character of nationalism cannot be glossed over by the application of a double standard. The right of oppressed peoples to the expression of their national identity and determination of their own fate is not synonymous with the perpetuation of the nationalist model of nation-states unrestrained in their exercise of national sovereignty and their pursuit of national interests. This model, in any part of the world, is inconsistent with the requirements of human survival. In short, the realization of human dignity depends on a balance between fulfillment and containment of nationalist aspirations.

REFERENCES


